(b) the loss of life and property in the States affected by drought or floods;

(c) the amount of financial help demanded by the affected States from the Central Government and the actual amount given to these States, State-wise; and

(d) the reasons for not giving the help according to the demand and whether the remaining amount of help is likely to be given in future, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (d) No Memorandum for assistance for drought in the wake of South-West Monsoon, 2005 has been received from any State Government. Jharkhand has, however, declared drought in 22 Districts while Government of Andhra Pradesh have also notified continued drought conditions in 644 Mandals. The extent of loss, if any, have so far not been reported by these States.

Ministry of Home Affairs is the nodal Ministry for matters relating to floods and necessary information is being collected from them.

Prices of Onions

287. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that while the prices of onion skyrocketed throughout India from September, 2005, cheap onions rotted in godowns in Rajathan;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether any action has been taken against the hoarders who created shortage in supply of onions; and

(d) the reasons for which Government had not taken steps to procure and supply cheap Rajasthan onions throughout the country to bring down prices of onions?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) No Sir. No such instance of rotting of cheap onions in godowns in Rajasthan has been reported by the Government of Rajasthan.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Suitable action was taken by the concerned State Governments to curb the rising trend in the prices of onions. However, no action under the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act 1955 could be taken since onion ceased to be an essential commodity with effect from 25th November, 2004.

(d) In order to check the price of onions, the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. procured onions from various States, including Rajasthan, for distribution to consumers at concessional rates.

Farmers living Below Poverty Line

288. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of farmers in the country, and percentage of total population of the country;

(b) how many of the above farmers are living Below Poverty Line, the percentage thereof, and how does it compare with total percentage of people living Below Poverty Line for the whole country;

(c) the per capita income of the above farmers who are living beyond poverty line, and how it compares with average per capita income of the country; and

(d) the special steps being taken by Government to ameliorate the pitiable plight of these poorest of the poor farmers?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) As per Population Census 2001, the total number of cultivators in the country was 127.31 million against the total population of 1028.61 million which forms 12.38 per cent of the total population of the country.

(b) Out of the total population, persons below the poverty line in 1999-2000 were 26.10 per cent whereas in rural area it was 27.09 per cent of the total rural population in the country. The proportion of persons belonging to farmer households (self-employed in Agriculture) below the poverty line was estimated to be 20.2 per cent as per the survey conducted by NSSO in 1999-2000.